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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: World Programme of Action for Youth**

# Policies and programmes involving youth

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to Commission for Social Development resolution 53/1 of 10 February 2015. It recalls the need for robust, stand-alone youth policies coupled with consistent cross-sectoral efforts and provides a compilation of recent initiatives in the area of youth policies and programmes based on input received from Member States, United Nations entities and civil society organizations. The report focuses on the three broad thematic considerations included in the resolution: gender, participation and inclusion, and marginalized groups.

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# I. Introduction

1. On 10 February 2015, the Commission for Social Development adopted resolution 53/1 on policies and programmes involving youth, in which it requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its fifty-fifth session, a comprehensive report on the implementation of the resolution, including progress on the achievements and challenges in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, in consultation with Member States, as well as with the relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes and the regional commissions, taking into account the work done by the United Nations system, and encouraged the Secretariat to consult, as appropriate, with youth-led and youth-focused organizations. Further to that request, the present report is based on responses obtained from Member States,[1] members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development[2] and youth-led structures.[3]

2. In its resolution 53/1, the Commission reiterated that the primary responsibility for implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth lies with Member States and urged Governments, in consultation with youth and youth organizations, to develop holistic and integrated youth policies based on the Programme of Action and to evaluate them regularly as part of the follow-up action on and implementation of the Programme of Action. Sections II to V of the present report explore policymaking and programming in the areas of gender, participation and marginalized groups. These thematic areas were identified as cross-cutting issues in the resolution and are pertinent to the development and implementation of robust and effective youth policies.

# II. Current policy overview and recent developments

3. Since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth, an increasing number of youth policies have been developed and revised from previous frameworks, particularly in recent years,[4] demonstrating the commitment by Governments to recognize, respond to and fulfil the needs, demands and aspirations of young people. While there is a lack of robust research and data, anecdotal

[1] Austria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Georgia, Lithuania, Mexico, Palau, Slovenia, South Africa, Swaziland, Sweden and Switzerland.

[2] Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, International Labour Organization, International Telecommunication Union, Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and United Nations Volunteers.

[3] The Major Group for Children and Youth and the European Youth Forum.

[4] *The State of Youth Policy in 2014* (Berlin, Youth Policy Press, 2014). Available from http://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/2014_State_Youth_Policy_2014_En.pdf, and Alex Farrow, "Children, young people and participation", Youth policy working paper No. 3 (Berlin, Youth Policy Press, 2016). Available from http://www.youthpolicy.org/library/documents/children-young-people-and-participation-youth-policy-working-paper-no-3/.

evidence from youth policymakers and practitioners supports the effectiveness and impact of the youth policies and approaches that are highlighted in the present report.

4. While governmental entities with the mandate and authority in respect of youth policies often exist, Member States and United Nations entities have noted recurrent challenges. These include lack of political sway, expertise and high-level commitment, competing government priorities, insufficient financial and material resources, arduous intersectoral coordination, misperceptions about young people and inadequate human resources for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Secretariat, is conducting a global capacity assessment on national youth entities to identify existing opportunities as well as gaps and challenges.

5. To address the limited implementation of national youth policies, there is a need to ensure that they are not developed and implemented in a vacuum but rather in coordination with other public policies that affect the lives of young people. National youth policies should therefore: (a) enable the development of cross-sectoral and integrated policy frameworks; (b) be based on empirical evidence and rigorous scientific analysis; (c) include young people in each stage of the youth policy process; and (d) be aligned with regional and global development frameworks, in particular in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

## A. A cross-sectoral approach: youth mainstreaming

6. Effective ways to bolster youth development include developing robust, stand-alone youth policies and integrating young people into sectoral policies of line ministries. In recent years, a cross-sectoral approach to youth policies has emerged both as an imperative for effectiveness and as a pragmatic answer to two challenges: the increasingly large youth population in many countries, especially the developing countries, on the one hand; and the poor implementation and funding of youth policies, on the other. A cross-sectoral approach also helps to support the development of young people so that they can achieve their full potential in all spheres of their lives. Additionally, mainstreaming is a recognized methodology for ensuring effective policies for specific social cohorts, as shown by the successful example of gender mainstreaming.

7. Through an interministerial and inter-agency strategy, youth mainstreaming ensures that a youth lens is integrated into policy and legislation formulation and practice, programme analysis, planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of cross-sectoral programmes and projects. Youth mainstreaming also shares the responsibility and accountability in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of youth policies by engaging with a broad number of stakeholders. Each public entity can review how its policies and programmes impact young people and optimize the use of financial and human resources.

8. Nevertheless, cross-sectoral approaches come at a cost: they require increased dialogue, planning and coordination within Governments, and even beyond, when

considering multilevel governance mechanisms, as in the case of decentralized or federal States. Strengthening the youth expertise of sectoral ministries and subnational governments is a winning strategy to build strong alliances on youth issues.

9. There is a continued need, however, to complement youth mainstreaming strategies with targeted interventions to promote the empowerment of young people and reduce inequalities, both among young people and between young people and the rest of the population. Inclusiveness and, in particular, social inclusion of young people, is one of the core aspirations of the 2030 Agenda. Target 10.2 of the Agenda emphasizes the need to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status by 2030.

10. Increasingly, Member States' vision and approaches with respect to youth policies include the adoption of cross-sectoral measures to respond effectively to the conditions, needs and interests of all young people (Azerbaijan, Mexico, the Niger and Sweden). The Governments of Botswana, Jamaica, Malaysia and the Solomon Islands are currently mainstreaming youth development in line ministries, with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Similarly, numerous structures, forums and mechanisms have been devised to coordinate cross-sectoral efforts in order to create conditions for improving young people's quality of life, well-being and access to rights (Austria, Fiji, Georgia, Mexico, Palau, Slovenia and Swaziland). The African Union Commission is launching a youth mainstreaming framework to position young people as key actors in shaping the work of the Commission on addressing Africa's challenges.

11. In the past, many Member States focused their youth mainstreaming work primarily on education, health and employment; however, this has now been expanded to other sectoral policies such as family, housing, transportation, justice, agriculture, leisure time or culture (Sweden). In particular, South Africa's two-pronged approach to youth development is aimed at mainstreaming youth development across various sectors while providing dedicated youth development platforms. In line with the call, in the World Programme of Action for Youth, for multilevel mechanisms for consultation, dissemination of information, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, Member States emphasized established structures for dialogue and follow-up and well-developed cooperation among the relevant institutions.

## B. Other enablers of effective youth policies

### 1. Evidence and data

12. At the request of Member States, the Secretary-General, at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, proposed a set of indicators relating to the World Programme of Action for Youth in order to assist Member States in assessing the situation of young people. Evidence-based youth policymaking is about deepening the understanding of the current status of young people and translating data, experience and knowledge into appropriate and successful strategies and policies. Evidence includes quantitative and qualitative statistics and data and scientific as well as practical knowledge.

13. The need for youth-specific data collection and analysis has received continued attention from policymakers. To strengthen evidence-based youth policymaking, collaboration with national statistical entities has led to several youth monographs and indices (Australia, Indonesia and Vanuatu). The Commonwealth Secretariat has developed a global youth development index, which is a composite index of 18 indicators that collectively measure multidimensional progress on youth development in 183 countries, including 49 of the 53 Commonwealth countries. The index measures the status of young people across five domains, namely, level of education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, political participation and civic participation.

14. Closely linked to data, indicators are an essential tool to assess the situation of young people and monitor progress towards implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth. In June 2015, Mexico added four new youth-related indicators to its national statistical framework, including the percentage of young people without access to health-care services, the percentage of young people below the well-being line and the youth unemployment rate.

15. Accurate baseline data are also a valuable tool to monitor and evaluate the impact of youth policies. While changes in the socioeconomic situation of young people may not always be attributable to youth policies, it remains necessary for youth policymakers to monitor not only output indicators but also socioeconomic indicators relating to young people.

16. Additionally, young people have become increasingly involved in the monitoring of youth and other sectoral policies, through several innovative means, such as training in data literacy, youth-led research or open data (Liberia). Mexico has engaged young people in the monitoring of policies, in particular by conducting youth consultations through the Citizens' Council for Monitoring Public Youth Policies. Shadow reporting by young people is another way to broaden knowledge on the impact of youth policies. In 2015, the European Youth Forum launched an extensive consultation open to youth-led organizations and published its *Shadow Report on Youth Policy: A youth perspective*.

17. Specific indicators measuring youth well-being and sectoral data disaggregated by age group have been included not only in monitoring and evaluation frameworks for national youth policies but also in regional youth action plans (the African Union and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)). Youth data are also consolidated through regional information systems and observatories, such as the Youth Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. The European Union Youth Monitor is composed of 41 indicators based on data provided by Eurostat or Eurobarometer surveys.

18. Efforts are still needed to identify and address youth data gaps. Owing to the lack of availability of specific budget information, it is still difficult for many Member States to track social investment targeting young people (Mexico). There is still little evidence worldwide about the situation of specific youth groups, such as indigenous youth, young migrants and refugees and young people with disabilities. In addition, some topics that are essential to youth well-being, such as youth political and civic engagement, are difficult to include in national statistical surveys because of conceptual and methodological issues.

### 2. Role of young people in policymaking

19. Young people can play an important role in any youth policy mechanism, both as the target of youth policies and as actors in implementation, especially when their role is clearly recognized in the national youth strategy. This inclusion ranges from comprehensive open consultations with young people to partnerships in the entire policymaking process. Benefits of the approach include averting the marginalization of young people, challenging their stigmatization, strengthening the credibility of State institutions, optimizing the impact of policies on young people and encouraging youth participation and empowerment. As discussed further in section IV below, numerous youth participation mechanisms under youth policies have been successfully implemented by Member States, including when consulting with non-organized youth (Brazil).

### 3. Alignment and coordination with regional frameworks

20. National youth policies can be strengthened when they are part of a regional youth development framework that allows for joint, coordinated and supported planning. A regional approach allows for intraregional sharing of experiences and good practices, as well as consistency in addressing regional issues concerning young people, such as climate change, migration or academic mobility. Streamlined reporting is another benefit of aligning national policy priorities and indicators with regional and international frameworks.

21. At the regional level, many Member States have recognized the specific needs of young people. The Ibero-American Youth Pact, adopted in 2016, reiterates the commitment of the signatories[5] to, inter alia, promoting youth policies, boosting youth participation and strengthening youth data. In June 2016, the Pacific Community agreed that mainstreaming youth in the regional organization's broader portfolio and programme delivery was a matter of priority. Ministers of Youth in the Caribbean updated the CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan with an improved monitoring and evaluation plan and a new timeline (2017-2021). Recognizing the need for continued investment in young people in Africa and for including them in the implementation framework of the African Youth Charter, the African Union decided that the 2017 African Union Summit would be held under the theme "Harnessing the demographic dividend through investment in youth". As part of the European Union Youth Strategy for 2010-2018, the European Union effectively implemented the European Union Youth Guarantee, which ensures that, within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, all young people receive a quality job offer, a traineeship or apprenticeship or the chance to continue their education.

### 4. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

22. The 2030 Agenda identified priorities for young people around the world. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals depends on Governments addressing national priorities by taking ownership of the Agenda and turning the

[5] Argentina, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Spain and Uruguay.

framework into measurable policies and action. Robust, innovative and progressive youth policies will serve to capture and concretize the Goals and provide a framework for their implementation to enable young people to fulfil their potential as active members of society.

23. The 2030 Agenda also recognizes the key role that today's young people are to play in ensuring its achievement by stating that young women and men are critical agents of change and will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world. In order to ensure that young people are enabled to act as the critical agents of change the world needs them to be, significant investments will be needed as the 2030 Agenda is rolled out. At the global level, this work is taking place in the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development Working Group on the 2030 Agenda. In November 2016, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth organized a one-day meeting to mobilize United Nations system technical expertise and guidance on youth-related aspects of the Agenda. In its regional workshops on evidence-based youth policies, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs supports Member States in reviewing the youth-related aspects of the Agenda and their importance and relevance to youth policies.

## C. Progress in achieving the World Programme of Action for Youth

24. In support of the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, Member States and United Nations entities have enhanced their efforts in the field of youth development through the design or revision of youth policies and programmes. Member States have continued to establish, or are developing or reviewing, national youth policies, programmes, strategies or action plans (Austria, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Dominica, Georgia, Guyana, Jamaica, Lithuania, Mexico, Nigeria, Palau, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden). Issue-specific youth policies, strategies, action plans, legislation and road maps have also been created, including with respect to youth employment (Egypt, El Salvador, Lithuania, Maldives and the Niger), sexual and reproductive health (Mexico and Thailand), entrepreneurship (Ethiopia) and comprehensive sexual education (Bulgaria). An increased focus on youth economic empowerment prompted the Niger to create the Ministry of Youth Entrepreneurship.

25. The United Nations system has provided policy support, resources or technical assistance to Member States that have developed or are currently developing national youth policies and related frameworks. Examples include Afghanistan's National Youth Policy (2014) and its National Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020 (elaborated with the technical and financial support of the United Nations through UNFPA) and a youth policy in the Dominican Republic (2016) (with contributions by the United Nations country team and the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth), which are first-time frameworks in the respective countries.

26. UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNESCO and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) supported the Government of Myanmar in developing an inclusive national youth policy, the country's first. In Somalia, the

United Nations country team and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia raised funds for the development of the national youth policy and are currently implementing the United Nations youth strategy, with support from the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, which is a comprehensive programmatic response to the needs and aspirations of young people. Costa Rica adopted a rights-based national youth policy in 2015, for which the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) provided technical assistance. UNV and UNDP collaborated with the Government of India in the preparation of four action plans for the implementation of the National Youth Policy 2014.

27. UNESCO and other United Nations entities supported the elaboration of a national youth policy in Burundi and Mongolia, as well as the revision of the national youth policy in Zimbabwe. Through the European Union-funded Networks of Mediterranean Youth Project, UNESCO provided technical assistance to national youth organizations, relevant ministries and youth stakeholders to develop or revise their legal and political frameworks related to young people, including in Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and the State of Palestine. Georgia developed a national youth policy (2014) with the support of UNFPA, along with an action plan (for the period 2014-2020) for its effective implementation. In Cambodia, UNPFA assisted the Government in developing a national youth action plan in order to operationalize the national youth policy.

## D. Technical cooperation, events and research on youth policies

28. Research, technical cooperation, events and meetings are being undertaken by United Nations entities to encourage and support Member States in enhancing the development and implementation of youth policies. Legislative, policy and programming support was provided to assist Member States in their commitments to youth development and policies in line with the World Programme of Action for Youth, including by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNESCO and UNV. Efforts in respect of the training and capacity-building of young people have been a priority of United Nations entities, with their inclusion in various fields (United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)). Efforts have also been made to build the capacities of Member States on concerns affecting young people, including on media and information literacy (UNESCO).

29. At the regional level, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs partners with Governments (Mexico), other United Nations entities (UNDP, UNESCO and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme), regional commissions (the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and ECLAC), intergovernmental entities (the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Pacific Community) and regional youth-led organizations (the Pacific Youth Council). The objective is to strengthen regional dialogue on youth policies and the 2030 Agenda among national Governments, national youth councils or the equivalent, youth-led civil society, national statistical offices and academic institutions. Capacity-building workshops on the cycle of youth policies and the importance of data and statistics have been held and, thus far, four regions or subregions (anglophone Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Latin America) and 54 Member States have participated.

30. A Development Account project led by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was implemented to strengthen the capacity of Governments in the ESCAP, ECA and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia regions in formulating inclusive and sustainable development policies. Under the project, an Asia-Pacific workshop on building capacity to develop youth policies was held in Bangkok in March 2016 and a youth policy toolbox to showcase policy and programme options, promote knowledge-sharing and provide technical advice is being developed. ECLAC carried out a project on social inclusion of young people in the region (from 2013 to 2015), which included an in-depth analysis of youth policies and their institutional frameworks. It also held a series of workshops on youth policies with representatives from national youth institutes.

31. To galvanize continued efforts on youth policymaking, Azerbaijan held the first Global Forum on Youth Policies in October 2014, supported by UNDP, UNESCO, the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth and the Council of Europe. The Forum provided a multi-stakeholder opportunity to assess the state of youth policies 20 years after the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth and resulted in the creation of guiding principles for integrated and inclusive youth policy development. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Programme of Action, the President of the General Assembly organized a high-level event in May 2015.

## III. Towards gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women

32. In accordance with the World Programme of Action for Youth, a crucial task of youth policy is to improve the situation of girls and young women. Gender inequality can be deeply rooted in gender stereotypes, social norms, behaviours and attitudes which perpetuate disparities and unequal treatment of girls and young women. Efforts to change long-standing patterns of treatment should occur early on in the lives of young men and young women, in the spheres of education, community and social life, including through youth policy.

33. Several Member States enhanced efforts towards gender equality and inclusivity through the development and implementation of gender-specific policies, cross-sectoral policies, projects, programmes and legislation (Georgia, Swaziland, Sweden and South Africa). Early detection of differences in the needs and challenges of young women and young men, and measures promoting gender equality policy objectives, were a significant part of these policies (Sweden). Ensuring equal opportunities between men and women and preventing discrimination were identified as the main principles of such policies (Slovenia). Issue-specific policies and plans recognized the significant challenges that young women face in the labour market, including in relation to equal pay for equal work, co-responsibility in the domestic sphere and the sharing of care work between young men and young women (El Salvador).

34. Measures on gender equality and the empowerment of women can be meaningfully implemented when adequate financial allocations such as specific budgets for gender-specific policies and gender-responsive budgets for non-gender-

specific policies are in place (Sweden). In particular, policies that advance gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health policies, can help to reduce pervasive attitudes and gender discrimination. Ensuring the involvement of both young women and young men in policy development can further ensure that policies are best placed to alter such attitudes and positioned to promote behaviours, roles and responsibilities that advance gender equality.

35. The participation of girls and young women in policymaking allows them to advocate on their own behalf. At the same time, young men and boys play a critical role in ensuring gender equality and in transforming normative gender roles and relations. Policies and programmes should take into account the role that boys and young men play in advancing gender equality and promote alternative notions of gender, including masculinity. Such shifts are effective in changing attitudes and behaviours, including related to violence against women.

36. Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth through indicators and data collection can be a means of assessing gender equality. In the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed set of indicators for the Programme of Action (E/CN.5/2013/8), gender equality was considered as a cross-cutting issue under each priority area and the importance of disaggregating data by gender was noted.

37. The promotion of gender equality remains a priority for numerous Member States and continues to be translated into national development efforts relating to young people, including in the fields of health, education, participation and employment. In Chile, a youth cabinet was established in 2015 as a space for participation, empowerment and training on topics that affect young people; the cabinet applies a quota system to ensure gender balance in regional elections to elect 155 young people. In Colombia, an amendment to Act 1622 allows for the unification of National Youth Council elections and permits young people, including those as young as 14 to 17 years old, to be elected as youth advisers. The Act specifies that 50 per cent of the list of candidates should comprise women, the first election processes in the country's history to ensure gender equity.

38. Sweden has undertaken measures to positively impact young people's living conditions within the framework of its gender equality policy, including to prevent sexual exploitation of young people via the Internet and other interactive media, to prevent and end forced marriage of young people, to foster educational efforts aimed at creating open and open-minded environments for young lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons and to develop knowledge and support for boys and young men. The promotion of gender equality is one of the fundamental goals of Chile's National Institute for Youth and all of its programmes incorporate a gender perspective. The Institute has also developed initiatives that include a specific gender perspective by targeting specific areas where it aspires to reduce the gender gap. Swaziland has supported a number of programmes on the empowerment of girls, in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development and the Global Fund, under the National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS.

39. Member States committed to the promotion and implementation of age- and gender- appropriate programmes on health issues, including on reproductive health-care services (Chile and Palau). South Africa launched its National Adolescent

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Framework Strategy (February 2015), which advances the protection of adolescents from coerced sexual experiences, exploitative sexual and reproductive relationships, sexual and gender-based violence, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and related issues.

40. In the field of education, initiatives to educate young people about gender equality are ongoing (Chile). In Mexico, the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination launched a self-study e-learning course on young people, tolerance and non-discrimination and the National Institute for Women held a course for adolescents to strengthen their knowledge about sexuality and social skills, with full respect for their sexual and reproductive rights.

41. United Nations entities actively supported the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of young women and girls in their policies and programming. The youth and gender equality strategy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) highlights four key areas, specifically, young women's leadership; promoting the economic empowerment and skills development of young women; fostering action to end violence against young women and girls; and promoting partnerships with young women and young men to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women, together with the United Nations Inter-agency Network on Youth Development and partners, spearheaded the first-ever youth forum at the Commission on the Status of Women in 2016 focusing on gender equality in the context of the 2030 Agenda, which resulted in a youth declaration that was formally introduced at the General Assembly and mentioned in the outcome document of the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. To nurture and provide support to young women's leadership and economic empowerment as outlined in the LEAP framework under the youth and gender equality strategy, UN-Women launched two coalitions (a global coalition of young women entrepreneurs for innovation and skills development (July 2016) and a coalition of young women leaders (August 2016).

42. United Nations entities worked to mainstream gender in all youth-related activities, publications and initiatives (ECLAC and UNESCO) and continue to highlight the need to mainstream a gender perspective in youth policies (ECLAC). Regarding initiatives focused on girls and young women, ECLAC held an expert group meeting to discuss the situation of girls and adolescents with disabilities in the region (November 2016) and prepared a joint ECLAC-UNICEF publication exploring the situation of girls and female adolescents in the region and presenting policy recommendations.

43. Entities continue to disseminate tools for gender equality and the empowerment of young women. UN-Women is producing a toolkit on working with boys and young men to change attitudes, norms and behaviours using experiential learning to achieve gender equality. Member States actively endorsed the UN-Women HeForShe campaign, including Canada, which committed to implementing the youth and gender equality strategy, and Mexico, which is complying with the campaign at the federal level. UNESCO continued to support Member States in their development, implementation and scaling-up of gender-responsive literacy policies, as well as in ensuring equal opportunities in respect of

diversified choices of learning and skills development for young girls at the post-primary level.

44. In 2015, UNDP, UN-Women and UNFPA, with funds from the Government of Sweden, launched the second phase of its Joint United Nations Programme for Gender Equality in Georgia, which focuses on the political and economic empowerment of women, the elimination of violence against women and the realization of the sexual and reproductive rights of the population. Initiatives and contests under this programme included a country-wide student essay contest. Funded by the Peacebuilding Fund, UNDP implemented a project in Kyrgyzstan under the theme "Youth for peaceful change", which was aimed at improving opportunities to acquire civic participation skills, creating better access to economic opportunities and creating opportunities for vulnerable young girls and boys to participate in decision-making at various levels.

## IV. Youth participation

45. As key stakeholders, young people should be actively involved in the design, development and implementation of youth policies and programmes at all levels. Governments can ensure such involvement by fostering information-sharing and including young people in decision-making at all stages of the policymaking process. It is important that the engagement of the youth constituency be substantive and consistent.

46. The effective participation of young people in the consultative processes for the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and plans affecting their lives enables those policies and processes to more accurately reflect their current needs and challenges. Young people's knowledge of the concerns of their constituency gives them unique insights that can inform the design of youth-related policies. With the tools and the empowerment to participate in policymaking, young people can make contributions leading to strategies that are more responsive to their needs, and their participation leads to policy frameworks that have greater legitimacy.

47. In their engagement with the United Nations, Member States stressed the importance of ensuring the active involvement of young people in decision-making and policy development (Austria, Azerbaijan and Canada). Numerous policy frameworks emphasize youth participation as a field of action (Austria and South Africa) or as a strategic framework objective (Austria, Colombia and South Africa). Consequently, Member States (Austria and Sweden) expressed that the involvement of young people should not be confined to youth-related policies but rather should be expanded to all policies that could have implications for them. Member States highlighted that they have or are developing mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making (Libya, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka). In the case of Sri Lanka, increasing the number of young women parliamentarians was a priority.

48. Member States and United Nations entities emphasized the importance of consultative processes with young people and youth-led organizations, including with national youth councils, to inform, design, revise and implement national youth policies (Austria, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Chile, Costa Rica, Georgia, Mexico,

Mongolia, Senegal, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden and Uruguay). The decentralization policy of Swaziland allows for the participation of young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes in all sectors from the grass-roots level, including the participation of girls, as well as marginalized young people, such as those living with disabilities. Liberia's recent Equal Representation and Participation Bill allows young people to have their voices heard as potential members of parliament. Online consultations and outreach to young people were utilized and considered important tools for informing and engaging young people in decision-making processes, as well as receiving feedback on initiatives (Austria and Azerbaijan).

49. Several countries adopted legislation as a tool to promote youth participation in decision-making, including through advisory councils (Colombia, Slovenia and Switzerland). In addition, in order to foster the participation of young people in institutional structures, several countries initiated or are in the process of initiating municipal, regional or national participation mechanisms to engage on issues that affect their communities, such as youth parliaments or advisory bodies. These mechanisms contribute to the activities of the national assembly or parliament; examples include the Prime Minister's Youth Council (2016) (Canada), the Youth Policy Council (Sweden), the Youth Cabinet (Chile) and the Youth Regulating Council (Colombia).

50. In addition, Member States utilized large-scale consultations, surveys, events and forums carried out with young people and youth-led organizations to help inform their work, policies and decision-making processes and reflect the multifaceted and complex nature of challenges faced by young people (Libya, the Niger, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka). Several types of surveys and participatory processes were used to capture the views of young people, including during the design of policies such as the Youth Strategy on Tour and Open Delphi 4 Youth. In Mexico, the development of the national youth programme "Projuventud" was the result of a national youth consultation; its monitoring committee seeks accountability through specific actions engaging civil society, institutions working for young people and youth representatives. At the regional level, in the European Union, national consultations were held as part of the Structured Dialogue of the European Youth Strategy in order to involve relevant stakeholders and young people in the development of European youth policy. At the international level, numerous efforts have been made by United Nations entities to improve policies, mechanisms, processes and channels that support youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda. UNDP is working with the Ibero-American Youth Organization on youth indicators for the 2030 Agenda review framework in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

51. United Nations entities continue to establish opportunities, mechanisms and processes to promote the participation of young people and youth-led organizations in their own activities and processes. An unprecedented number of Member States included youth delegates as part of their delegations to United Nations intergovernmental meetings, with more than 66 delegates from 37 countries attending the General Assembly. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which oversees the United Nations youth delegate programme, supported the participation of youth delegates in the aforementioned meetings. In 2016, Bolivia

(Plurinational State of), Canada, Chad, Czechia, Eritrea, Hungary and the United Arab Emirates launched youth delegate programmes, thereby encouraging youth participation in decision-making processes at the international level. Several countries, including Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, sent delegates to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2016. That number will likely increase with the progressive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

52. With regard to youth participation in major United Nations meetings, forums and assemblies, the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum continues to serve as a space and mechanism for dialogue among young people, Member States, civil society, United Nations entities and other partners, to specifically address the role of young people in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. A youth forum held during the ministerial segment of the fourteenth session of UNCTAD (July 2016) allowed young people to raise their concerns with global leaders participating in the session. The first-ever youth forum at the Commission on the Status of Women resulted in a youth declaration that was both formally introduced at the General Assembly and mentioned in the outcome document of the sixtieth session of the Commission. At the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in May 2016, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) brought together more than 100 youth representatives, providing them with an opportunity to influence the decisions of the United Nations body.

53. United Nations organizations emphasized their efforts related to the strengthening of youth participation and inclusion, such as the "Dialogue for the future: promoting coexistence and diversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina" project, a joint United Nations initiative on peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina implemented by UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO, which entailed working with young people to create safe places for youth in decision-making processes. Events engaging citizens in policymaking were held (for example, "Diplohack Tbilisi" in Georgia) by UNDP and other partners. Another such event was the "Dialogue on strengthening the youth sector" of Bosnia and Herzegovina (February 2016), aimed at creating a platform for democratic dialogue as a tool to strengthen collaboration in order to improve planning and the implementation of youth policies and existing legislation. Training-of-trainers programmes were implemented in Burundi, focusing on nine themes, including participation in decision-making. Some 500 young people participated in the peer training programme and 2,500 young people benefited from mentoring by their peers (UNESCO).

54. Numerous barriers inhibit and restrict the participation and involvement of young people in decision-making processes. Often, the lack of space for participation or engagement or the inaccessibility of organizations to young people act as barriers to engagement. Impediments to youth participation can also relate to their means to participate individually or to the limited funds available to youth-led organizations. The involvement of young people is further impeded by their need to look for employment or continue their studies or their inability to be available on a full-time basis. Where gender inequality remains pervasive, young people can frequently be excluded from decision-making because of gender barriers. Support to young people and youth-led organizations in terms of funding and resources recognizes and promotes the importance of young people and enables them to build

capacity. It encourages more young people to join organizations and allows the organizations to fund participation in decision-making, when needed.

## V. Inclusion of young people from marginalized groups

55. As a heterogeneous group, the youth constituency includes marginalized groups, who often require unique attention. Taking into account the social and economic circumstances in each country, indigenous youth, youth in rural areas, youth with disabilities and young migrants may be at greater risk of marginalization and social exclusion. Marginalization can have an impact on the ability of young people to meaningfully participate in social, economic, cultural and political spheres of society, including decision-making that affects them.

56. To reduce social exclusion and marginalization, policymakers can factor the concerns and needs of young people from marginalized groups into participatory processes, as essential stakeholders. Such participation can reinforce policy frameworks, given that it provides an opportunity for the distinctive views and needs of such young people to be considered and interwoven into the appropriate policy structures. The participation of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of young people can enable them to take ownership of the corresponding frameworks devised to remove barriers to their inclusion in society in the fields of education, employment, health and civic engagement.

57. Integrated youth policies that pay attention to the needs of marginalized populations, as well as the societal conditions that lead to vulnerability and generate social exclusion, can help to ensure their visibility, reduce inequalities perpetuated as a result of belonging to a certain group and supply the tools and skills required for them to influence their lives and their communities. Policies that support young people, particularly the poor and marginalized, are necessary to remove the additional systemic and institutional obstacles that limit their contributions and to ensure that their full potential is realized.

58. Additional targeted policies may be required to tackle the exclusion, discrimination and inequalities that certain groups of young people may face, empowering them to develop their full potential to lead dignified lives in their societies. The comprehensive social inclusion of marginalized young people requires concerted, holistic and cross-sectoral approaches in policy areas related to women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, refugees, migrants, young people in rural areas and the economically impoverished by ministries responsible for young people, employment, food and agriculture, housing, social affairs, public health, environment, law, transport and social welfare.

59. Rather than a one-time consultation, the inclusion of marginalized groups should be understood as a regular and continuous process with the involvement of the affected groups of young people and adequate resources to engage disenfranchised young people who are not necessarily connected within organized structures. Given that monitoring and evaluation are significant components of the implementation of youth policies, the proposed set of indicators for the World Programme of Action for Youth was designed to assist Member States in developing their own programmes for monitoring the implementation of the framework,

consistent with the national priorities for youth policy and the social and economic circumstances in each country, and can be tailored to include marginalized groups.

60. In their reporting, Member States indicated that the distinct concerns of marginalized groups are reflected in national youth policy and youth-related legislation (Austria, Azerbaijan and Swaziland). Legislation and corresponding policy frameworks further ensure that minority groups are represented in participatory mechanisms (Austria) and frameworks to combat poverty and discrimination (Lithuania and Switzerland).

61. Member States continue to focus on the vulnerabilities faced by marginalized groups in their programming, particularly regarding youth with disabilities, indigenous youth and young migrants. Regarding the inclusion of indigenous youth, in Sweden, Sami youth and Sáminuorra, an organization that supports them, are eligible to receive grants for their constituency. In Mexico, several actions for indigenous youth were undertaken for the education of indigenous children and young people, such as canteens and homes for indigenous children and scholarships for young students for the pursuit of higher education, and the National Institute of Indigenous Languages provided young people with interpreters to promote their access to justice. Sweden fostered inclusion through various measures, including by identifying and disseminating positive examples of how young civil society creates meeting places and networks between migrant youth and other young people. Member States highlighted the important role of access to quality education in reducing marginalization, given that it helps to prepare young people for active participation in society (Lithuania and Slovenia).

62. Throughout their work, United Nations entities supported efforts to translate the promotion of social inclusion and equality into action by addressing marginalized groups in their programming. As one of numerous projects taking into consideration marginalized young people, UNESCO, in collaboration with local partners, established youth information centres in Jordan and Lebanon (the countries that host the highest number of Syrian refugees), provided them with access to information and built their skills through capacity-building. With a view to ensuring wider and more informed youth participation, including among rural youth, in the development of the national youth policy, Mongolian authorities, the Mongolian Education Alliance and UNESCO developed workshops that strengthen young people's leadership and capacity to influence policymaking. Similarly, UNESCO developed the Linking Generations through Radio toolkit for radio producers working with children and young people. This resource has been translated into practice by the 32 African community radios that are part of the Swedish-funded extrabudgetary project "Empowering local radios through information and communication technologies".

63. UNIDO, in partnership with the Italian CRT Foundation, developed a project to harness the potential of young people as social entrepreneurs in the Euro-Mediterranean region and empower young women and men by strengthening their capacities to induce positive social change through entrepreneurship and innovative business solutions.

64. UNFPA held a global indigenous youth meeting on culturally safe approaches to HIV, harm reduction and the sexual health of young key populations from indigenous communities, and incorporated the results into a road map, for

indigenous youth councils, on access to sexual and reproductive health-care services for young key populations from indigenous communities. ECLAC published *Youth: realities and challenges for achieving development with equality* (2015), which analyses the health disparities among rural and urban as well as indigenous and non-indigenous young people and examines the challenges faced by young people with disabilities in the education and employment spheres. Given the importance of evidence-based policies, ECLAC further developed an online youth platform to provide up-to-date statistics that would enable policymakers to assess the situation of marginalized young people, where data exist, and strengthen the design of policies and follow-up.

## VI. Multiplying efforts in the United Nations

65. The United Nations system continues to orient its efforts towards the meaningful inclusion of young people in society through actions and initiatives in, inter alia, education, employment, peacebuilding and volunteerism.

66. Since its formalization in 2010, the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development has grown into a network of more than 40 entities under its permanent co-chair, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its rotating co-chair (UNDP for 2015-2016 and UN-Women for 2016-2017). Civil society actively participates in the Network's working groups, which have been successful in carrying out work in relation to, inter alia, gender equality and peacebuilding.

67. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development is implementing the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP), which remains a robust framework to enhance inter-agency collaboration on youth policies and programmes. A 2014 report provided an update on the process and the implementation of the Youth-SWAP during its first year at all levels. Following the successful 2015 pilot survey on youth employment and entrepreneurship outcomes, a full-scale survey was launched on all Youth-SWAP thematic areas for all United Nations country teams and the members of the Network. The survey and reporting process is facilitated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP. It will guide further entity-based and joint programming to advance youth development.

68. To foster action on the issue at a time when sustained high levels of youth unemployment and poor-quality and low-paying jobs remain a critical concern globally, Werner Faymann was appointed as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth Employment in August 2016. Mr. Faymann will work in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth and the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development on the challenge of youth unemployment, in order to support the realization of employment-related goals and actions under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth, the World Programme of Action for Youth and the youth employment targets set out in the 2030 Agenda.

69. The Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Ahmad Alhendawi, undertook 63 visits in 43 countries to advocate for countries to strengthen their youth outreach

and development endeavours, including the adoption of a comprehensive national policy on young people and cross-sectoral efforts for young people in their policymaking. In 2016, his office issued a progress report for the period 2013-2016 on the achievements of the four key pillars of its workplan, namely participation, partnerships, harmonization and advocacy. The United Nations Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals — 17 global citizens recognized for their outstanding leadership in their efforts to achieve the Goals — were announced in September 2016 by the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth.

70. A Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security was hosted by Jordan and co-organized by the United Nations on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development to discuss the vital role that young people play in sustaining peace. The Forum, which was held in August 2015, resulted in the Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security. In December 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security, in which it called for a progress study on the positive contribution of young people to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at the local, national, regional and international levels.

71. Several United Nations entities developed and continued to implement internal strategies and internal task forces focusing on young people (UNDP, UNV and UN-Women). UNDP launched its new five-year Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace, with the view that youth empowerment is both a human rights imperative and a smart investment in sustainable development and peace. The Global Initiative for Decent Jobs for Youth, launched at the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum in February 2016, was prepared under the leadership of ILO and brings together 21 United Nations entities in an effort to expand country-level action on decent jobs for young people through innovative interventions, knowledge and multi-stakeholder partnerships. In consultation with Governments, the initiative will coordinate employment and economic policies for job growth and social inclusion and protect labour rights to ensure that young people receive equal treatment.

72. With the aim of enriching the understanding of youth development and creating an extensive knowledge base on young people, a vast number of entities conducted research on issues such as youth employment, participation, volunteerism, information and communication technologies, school-related gender-based violence, green skills and lifestyles (ECLAC, ESCAP, ILO, the International Telecommunication Union, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNESCO, UNDP and UNV). Entities conducted extensive research, alone or in partnership with other entities or stakeholders, to examine the issues affecting young people and produced a variety of reports, policy briefs and technical papers to disseminate the issues. The United Nations continued its work to create accessible information for young people, including youth-friendly knowledge products and toolkits (UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO and UN-Women). Resources such as massive open online courses were created as tools to empower citizens, including young people (UNEP). In addition, campaigns and communications on issues affecting young people were a priority of United Nations organizations, including on reducing food waste (UNEP), wildlife protection (UNEP), gender equality (UN-Women) and the 2030 Agenda (UN-Women).

73. The flagship publication of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *United Nations World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement*, explored the participation of young people in economic, political and community life. The report responds to growing interest in and an increased policy focus on youth civic engagement among Governments, young people and researchers and provides thematic insights on economic, political and community engagement, coupled with expert opinion pieces so as to provide robust and varied perspectives. It is intended to serve as an impetus and tool for dialogue, policy discussion and action.

## VII. Conclusion and recommendations

74. A comprehensive approach to youth policy often includes targeted as well as cross-sectoral efforts, continuous youth engagement, evidence-based approaches, and links to regional and global processes and priorities. Addressing issues and challenges faced by young people across all sectors of work comprises a focus on gender equality, youth participation and the inclusion of marginalized groups. Such approaches to policy-making contribute to the robustness of the resulting policies and their implementation and address inequalities within marginalized groups.

75. Taking into account the contributions received, the following actions are recommended to Member States:

(a) **Develop and strengthen existing evidence-based national policies for youth development and endorse coherent cross-sectoral efforts in line with the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as ensure the availability of adequate resources for implementation and the participation and inclusion of young people;**

(b) **Increase qualitative and quantitative research and data collection on the effectiveness of youth policies, including the impact of and approaches to youth policies, taking into account youth-led research and data collection where appropriate;**

(c) **Take concrete measures, such as establishing participatory processes, ensuring that the needs and voice of marginalized groups are included in policymaking, with the goal of leaving no one behind;**

(d) **Ensure gender equality for girls and young women, including enacting corresponding legislative and policy reform as appropriate.**